



Citizen Summit II

Frequently Asked Questions: Affordable Housing in the District of Columbia

Since January 2001 the District has been working with a broad range of community members creating Strategic Neighborhood Action Plans (SNAPs) for 39 neighborhood clusters across the city. These SNAPs cover topics ranging from basic municipal services to economic development. The availability of quality, affordable housing emerged as an important topic in several neighborhoods. Below is a list of the most Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs) and responses. The District of Columbia is committed to providing housing opportunities for all of its residents and the following answers demonstrate that commitment.

1. What is the present status of the Omnibus Housing Legislation?

This past April, Mayor Williams sent to the Council an omnibus housing bill that is currently being considered by the Committee on Economic Development and the Committee on Finance and Revenue. The Council said that it anticipates passing the bill by the end of the year.

2. How will the Housing Production Trust Fund (HPTF) work and how will it create more affordable housing opportunities?

This past spring, the Mayor proposed dedicating approximately \$12 million a year to the Housing Production Trust Fund. The Council is currently considering the proposal. The Department of Housing and Community Development administers the Trust Fund and decides how the money should be used.

3. How does the District define affordable housing?

In the District, there are many different programs that help subsidize housing and each program has its own definition of "affordable." All of federal housing programs use the Area Median Income (AMI), or the average income for the entire Washington region, as the standard and then make adjustments for family size and other characteristics. The area median income for a family of four in the Washington area is \$85,600. This is more than double the District's median income of \$41,000.

In general, the District breaks affordable housing into the following income categories:

| Income Definitions | As a Percentage of Area Median Income | Annual Income for Individual | Annual Income for a Family of 4 |
|---------------------------|--|-------------------------------------|--|
| Very Low Income | Under 30% of AMI | \$17,980 or less | \$25,680 or less |
| Low Income | 30% - 60% of AMI | \$17,981 - \$36,330 | \$25,680 - \$51,900 |
| Moderate Income | 60% - 80% of AMI | \$36,331 - \$47,950 | \$51,900 - \$68,500 |
| Middle Income | 80% - 120% of AMI | \$47,951 - \$71,900 | \$68,500 - \$102,700 |

4. How does the District help families who earn less than 30% of AMI?

During FY 2000 and FY 2001, District agencies helped finance 1,100 units of housing that are affordable to families earning less than 30% of AMI, or approximately \$25,680 for a family of four. Families earning less than 30% of AMI are also eligible for housing in one of the District of Columbia Housing Authorities 9,000 units, in one of the 11,000 privately owned apartments that are subsidized by a federal program (such as project-based section 8 financing), and in private rental units that accept Section 8 vouchers.

5. What is the status of housing that was developed with project based Section 8 financing?

Within the next five years, approximately 10,000 units will be up for renewal. The owners of most of the units are likely to renew their contracts to provide affordable housing and District agencies are working with other owners to ensure that the units remain affordable.

6. How does the District help preserve project based Section 8 housing?

District agencies work together to help preserve the District's project based Section 8 housing. Last year in Ward 1, the District helped preserve almost 950 units of project based Section 8 housing. As part of the Omnibus Housing bill, Mayor Williams proposed requiring owners of such buildings to notify the city and residents in advance so that the building can be preserved.

7. What is the status of rent control in the District of Columbia?

The current rent control rules were established with the passage of the Rental Housing Act of 1985. This past fall, the Council extended the Act for another four years until December 31, 2004. Almost 2/3 of the apartments in the District are covered by rent control.

8. How is the District protecting elderly residents from sharply increasing rents and property tax rates?

Elderly residents are currently eligible for a 50% tax reduction. As part of the Omnibus Housing bill, Mayor Williams also proposed a tax credit for low-income, long-term homeowners that will effectively cap property tax increases at five percent.

9. What is the District doing to encourage the development of affordable housing?

Since 1999, District agencies provided \$145 million worth of grants and \$195 million worth of below market financing to help finance more than 7,200 units of affordable housing. The agencies have another 4,000 units of affordable in their pipelines that are in their advanced planning stages. As part of the Omnibus Housing bill, Mayor Williams proposed dedicating \$10 – 12 million a year to affordable housing.

10. Is the District contemplating the implementation of "inclusionary zoning ordinances" to increase the stock of affordable housing?

This fall the District will begin reviewing the City's Comprehensive Plan, where the city's zoning rules are established. The Williams Administration plans to consider new Inclusionary Development and Linkage policies that will help promote mixed-income housing in downtown and throughout the city.

11. What strategy has the District developed to improve enforcement of regulations regarding sub-standard housing conditions, vacant properties, trash on private properties, non-payment of taxes, etc?

Over the past two years, DCRA has boarded up, cleaned up, and even demolished 1,400 vacant and abandoned units. DCRA has modernized its efforts to crackdown on vacant and abandoned buildings. It doubled the number of staff dedicated to neighborhood stabilization from 26 to 57 and implemented RAPIDS, which allows inspectors to remotely access a central database and will speed up their enforcement work.

12. What methods does the District propose or have in place to take control and rehabilitate abandoned properties?

The District is promulgating regulations to implement the "Abatement and Condemnation of Nuisance Properties Omnibus Amendment Act of 2000." Among the bill's many provisions is "Quick Take" which will allow the city to take abandoned properties after adequate notice to the owners. The District then plans to transfer them to new homeowners for rehabilitation or to developers who will convert them into new homes.